

STRUCTURING IN COMMUNITY POLICING: INSTITUTIONALIZING INNOVATIVE CHANGE

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Throughout the 20th century, police reform efforts have almost universally focused on changing employee behavior. Historically, studies of the human dynamics of organizations offer compelling evidence that organizational structure is a major determinant of employee behavior. Previous attempts to introduce innovative change in police organizations have failed to endure primarily because it has not been well understood by police executives that supportive structural changes are essential to institutionalizing behavioral change. Suggestions are given for the types of behavior-shaping structural changes that will maximize the probability of institutionalizing community policing as an integral part of routine police management and operations.

Keywords: Community policing; Institutionalization; Organizational theory; Police behavior; Police management; Structural change

INTRODUCTION

It is claimed that community policing is the first serious attempt at major police reform in over half a century (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). Familiarity with the community policing concept has saturated the policing industry as a function both of diffusion of information and federal support. The literature indicates, however, that effort to incorporate the community policing model into traditional policing operations is faltering. For example, a survey of local police organizations found that about 48% report that they have adopted community policing or are in the implementation process (National Institute of Justice, 1995). McEwen's (1995) survey found that 82% of municipal police, and 65% of county police serving populations of more than 50,000, report having adopted community policing. More recently, however, Kerley and Scheb's (1998) survey of police leaders found only half report using community policing strategies "extensively."

*Dr. EmmaJean "EJ" Williams passed away after a brief illness Monday, February 24, 2003. Dr. Williams began her tenure at Fayetteville State University in the Department of Social Sciences during the Fall Semester of 1996. She earned the Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Reed College; a Masters degree and a doctoral degree in Urban Studies from Portland State University. Her tireless devotion to educating students was evident for all to see and emulate. She was truly loved by all that knew her. She will be forever in our hearts and she will be missed.

Community policing commentators and analysts agree that the endurance of community policing will depend upon the extent to which it becomes both philosophically and operationally integrated with routine police operations (cf. Sparrow, 1988; Goldstein, 1990, 1993; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990; Williams and Sloan, 1990; Braiden, 1994; Kratcoski and Dukes, 1995; Maguire, 1997; Oliver, 1998; Ramsey, 1998). In the first empirical study of structural change in community policing organizations, Maguire (1997: 572) concluded that, in general, "... community policing advocates have tended to be unsuccessful in implementing their reform agendas."

Previous attempts to introduce innovative change in police organizations have failed to endure primarily because it has not been well understood by police executives that supportive structural changes are essential to institutionalizing behavioral change (Walker, 1993). Wycoff (1995) reports the findings of a survey of municipal and county police chief executives in which 52% say that they do not perceive a need to make major changes in organizational policies and goals when adopting the community policing model. Taylor, Fritsch and Caeti (1998) maintain that this lack of basic knowledge about organizational theory and development is persistent and widespread, and agree with Walker (1993: 1) that the failure of lesser reforms such as team policing was caused by the "failure to provide structural changes to mesh with the changed direction." Indeed, Zhao (1996) notes in his study of police organizational change that few structural changes have been implemented by organizations claiming to have adopted community policing. Metcalf (1981: 507) suggests that absent a basic understanding of the relationship between organizational structure and employee behavior, organizations risk bias toward building programs and activities around past successes, leading to the unintended consequence of accumulating inertia. Maguire (1997: 556) affirms that:

... departments that implement the programmatic components of community policing without the structural changes required ... will lack the appropriate infrastructure to support community policing activities, and will maintain or eventually revert to more traditional forms of policing.

Oliver (1998: 155) agrees, stating that "... structural changes must be made in both organization and management to successfully implement community policing." Washington, DC Chief of Police Ramsey (1998: 1, 9) adds:

In recent years police departments across the country have struggled with trying to implement the philosophy of community policing with the same organization structures we have used for years. The result: Our structure has become fundamentally out of sync with the way work gets done in the organization.

The literature indicates that community policing is still in the experimental stage of development (Clark, 1994; Rosenbaum, Yeh and Wilkenson, 1994; Zhao, 1996). It is at this critical stage that careful attention needs to be given to the types of structural changes that will assist in institutionalizing community policing. The literature is rife with suggestions about why the change is needed (Goldstein, 1990, 1993; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990; Zhao, 1996), and the types of programmatic elements required to implement community policing (Kennedy, 1987; Kelling, Wasserman and Williams, 1988; Sparrow, 1988; Brown, 1989; Goldstein, 1993; Stipak, Immer and Clavadetscher, 1994; Maguire, 1997; Oliver, 1998). However, few guidelines are available to assist adopting organizations in the change process itself (Moore, 1994; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 1994) especially restructuring and redesign.

This paper provides a theoretical assessment of the implementation of the community policing model and stresses the importance of 'structuring in' community policing in order to maximize the probability of successful institutionalization.

UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Structural Changes Redefine Behaviors

Throughout the 20th century, police reform efforts have almost universally focused on changing the behavior of line personnel (Alpert and Dunham, 1986: 292; Sykes, 1986). Historically, studies of the human dynamics of organizations offer compelling evidence that the structure of organizations is a major determinant of employee behavior (Goffman, 1961; Zimbardo and Ruch, 1977; Wilson, 1989). Indeed, police management experts Roberg and Kuykendall (1997) assert that the ultimate success of any organizational change effort depends on how well the organization can alter the behavioral patterns of its employees (Wilson, 1989: 34). This relationship is substantiated by organizational theorists who assert that “most ‘people’ problems really stem from structural flaws rather than flaws in individuals” (Bolman and Deal, 1992: 355; see also Schon, 1971: 34). Sandler and Mintz’s (1974: 458) claim that this is “nowhere more dramatically illustrated than in the field of law enforcement” was recently supported by Wycoff and Skogan’s (1994) evaluation of the Madison, Wisconsin police department’s community policing initiative. Anticipating strong internal resistance to the planned change, Madison designed its community policing initiative to reduce this resistance. It has since been discovered that behavioral change is forced in the desired direction by altering the structural components that support the targeted behaviors. Although internal resistance to change was considered a major obstacle to community policing reform at the beginning, adopting organizations have since learned that with the proper structure and design, internal resistance becomes a non-issue in the change process.

Dimensions of Organizational Change

The magnitude of organizational change varies, depending upon the type of change and its purpose. This dimension of organizational change can be either incremental, or innovative. Incremental changes modify or augment existing routines, patterns of organization and behavior, or policy. These are “shallow” changes (Ledford, Mohrman, Mohrman and Lawler, 1989: 10) that amount to “orientations” which tend to reinforce the basic structure and core values of the organization (Tushman and Romanelli, 1985: 176). Incremental changes “graft new programs onto old philosophies, organizational designs, and management practices” (Roberg and Kuykendall, 1993: 419).

Innovative changes introduce new routines, patterns of organization and behavior, and policies that may represent “transformational” change (Egri and Frost, 1991: 184) where “strategies, power, structure and systems change” (Tushman and Romanelli, 1985: 173, 179). Innovative changes are sometimes revolutionary. Revolutionary change challenges the basic assumptions and realities around which an organization is structured, and which gives form to an organization’s culture. Gersick (1991: 19) describes revolutionary change as a “recreation” during which the organization must be “dismantled” and “a subset of the system’s old pieces, along with some new pieces, [must] be put back together into a new configuration, which operates according to a new set of rules.”

Although the definitions of incremental change and innovative change clarify their differences, the distinctions become less clear when innovative change is adopted piece-meal. A change may, by its nature, qualify as an innovative change, but when adopted by a single organizational subunit rather than organization-wide, it becomes, in effect, incremental.

Examples of this distinction among police organizations are innovative “add-ons” (Walker, 1993: 40) such as police–community relations units, neighborhood police teams, and foot patrols that operate within the parameters of existing structures, philosophies, and operations (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990: 17). Although they have the potential to alter the organization’s fundamental structure, the change effects are confined to the operating units adopting the change and thus are generally short-lived.

Few adopting organizations can recommend themselves as general “models” for organizational restructuring (Goldstein, 1993; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 1994). However, exemplary community policing initiatives abound to guide decision makers in the change process (cf. The Community Policing Consortium, 1998). Portland (Oregon), Madison, Baltimore, Newport News, St Petersburg, New York City, and a host of other adopting agencies serve as excellent examples. There are also important examples of what not to do. Community policing initiatives in Houston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and others can serve as examples of initiatives that have failed or are failing because supportive structural changes are weak, easily reversible, or non-existent.

Among the general theoretical issues underlying the introduction of innovative organizational change is that of discovering the kind of organizational structure that will support and sustain the planned change. Bedeain (1980: 293) claims that the process of organizational change is one of the least developed areas of organizational study. Absent a general theory to guide organizational restructuring, police agencies adopting community policing have been challenged to discover, through a process of trial and error, the kind of organizational structure that will maximize the probability of institutionalizing the change.

This does not, however, rule out a theoretical analysis of restructuring for innovative change. Numerous *post hoc* analyses of past attempts to implement innovative change in police organizations are available to inform present-day police administrators of factors that may be necessary to consider to enhance the probability of successful organizational change (cf. The Community Policing Consortium, 1998). In addition, a pool of knowledge exists about organizational change in general. This information may be useful in guiding administrative decisions about the kinds of changes required, pitfalls to avoid, and the process by which change can be effected.

THE STRUCTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF INSTITUTIONALIZING COMMUNITY POLICING

The tasks and style of policing required by police community relations units, neighborhood policing teams, foot patrols, and currently by community policing, are incongruent with the prevailing traditional organizational structure (Walker, 1993: 78). The experience of earlier attempts to implement innovative changes without consideration for this incompatibility informs contemporary police administrators about some of the “structural issues that may arise” and of the need to “work to realign roles and relationships” (Bolman and Deal, 1991: 382). A notable example of the results of this incompatibility is the community policing initiative in Houston, which began in 1982. A review of the planning (Oettmeier and Brown, 1988), implementation (Skogan, 1990), and management (CRESAP, 1991) of this 10-year project finds that virtually all of the theoretical guidelines and criteria for successful implementation and institutionalization of organizational change were violated. Restructuring was incremental and compartmentalized, facilitating internal dissent within the agency

that in turn prevented integration of the community policing concept among the various responsibility units. The ultimate effect of this was diminished quality of service in the field. For this reason, the project lost credibility with Houston's public officials and with the community. Restructuring occurred from the top down, prior to learning what would and would not work, supporting Heckscher and Applegate's (1994: 10) findings that the "sole test of organizational innovations is their contributions to performance."

Because the customer service focus of community policing problem-solving strategies is foreign to the traditional policing model, most organizations implement community policing on a trial-and-error basis. For this reason, the community policing officer needs to be permitted the behavioral flexibility to take risks as s/he experiments to learn "what works." Organizational restructuring needs to follow learning through creative experimentation. If structural change precedes behavioral change, the organization risks remaining rigid and rule-driven. If structural supports are provided for behaviors that have proven effective for achieving community policing goals, the organization becomes flexible and dynamic. Restructuring for community policing must be a self-designing process because the problems in any given community are unique.

Both police scholars and practitioners agree that if innovative changes that challenge the principles, philosophy, and values of the fundamental deep structure and culture of traditional policing are to succeed, they must become the operating philosophy of the entire organization (see, e.g., Brown, 1989; Goldstein, 1990; Williams and Sloan, 1990; Harmon, 1993; Braiden, 1994; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1994). The lesson may lie in Gersick's (1991: 34) discovery that in all types of organizations, "fundamental change cannot be accomplished piece-meal, slowly, gradually, and comfortably." Conversely, police management experts argue that in order to maximize the probability of success, implementation of change, the magnitude of community policing, must proceed slowly and gingerly. Such theorists are adherents of incremental change and are setting adopting organizations up for failure. These commentators adhere to a set of theoretical assumptions supported by numerous examples in private industry that planned organizational change that is implemented too quickly and too soon seldom endures. Such theories apply only to change implemented from the top down. While none of the examples include public sector organizations, past failed attempts to implement innovative change in police organizations may well be a result of the quasi-military management structure which demands that all changes be initiated from the top down. Pennings (1992) asserts that successful structural change depends upon bottom-up initiation.

In their excellent evaluation of New York City's community policing initiative, McElroy, Cosgrove and Sadd (1993: 186) describe the structural implications of introducing community policing strategies into traditional policing organizations. A "reconsideration of virtually all departmental operations and structures" is forced by the implementation of community policing "at even a modest level" including:

- the nature of the agency's mission;
- the basis for an agency's claim to legitimacy;
- the nature of the agency's relationship to the political and social environment;
- the services offered;
- the service delivery strategies used;
- criteria and processes through which resources are allocated;
- the methods used to assess control and reward performance and
- the values, goals, objectives, and procedures involved in training.

COMMITMENT TO CHANGE IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The concept of community policing is linked to the communitarian notion that “It takes a village,” i.e., an organization-wide transition to the community policing model requires commitment from city officials and the heads of other public agencies in addition to the community and private sector. The Portland, Oregon City Council passed a Resolution adopting community policing and mandating cooperative interagency coordination of services in carrying out problem-solving initiatives in partnership with the community. Historically, the police have not considered the management practices of other agencies to be a legitimate area of police concern. In practice, however, it becomes apparent that many problem-solving projects are not only in reaction to irresponsible or lax administration by other public service providers, but also by private business-owners and managers (Williams, 1996: 313). This important initial step in the transition process removed responsibility for the change from the police chief executive and served to deflect critical reaction by Bureau employees.

The structure of an organization is determined by, and anchored to, the organization’s mission. Osborne and Gaebler (1992: 131) stress that “a mission statement can drive an entire organization, from top to bottom.” Successful institutionalization of community policing is likely only if it is included as part of the adopting organization’s mission (Kratcoski and Dukes, 1995). Gleason (1998: 2) maintains that a restated mission together with a published vision and set of core values will provide the foundation for effecting the behavioral changes necessary to institutionalize community policing. Mission statements clarify the values and goals of the agency and serve as a “yardstick for the assessment of the organization” (Greene, Bergman and McLaughlin, 1994: 101). Efforts to develop tasks sufficient to carry out the new mission drives organizational restructuring. The term “community policing philosophy” is widely used as a short-hand method for contrasting traditional and community policing (Williams, 1995). Punctuating the philosophical differences between these two models of policing are the Portland (Oregon) Police Bureau’s “old” and “new” mission statements. The old mission statement read:

The Bureau of Police is responsible for the preservation of the public peace, protection of rights of persons and property, the prevention of crime, and the enforcement of Federal laws, Oregon state statutes and city ordinances within the boundaries of the city of Portland.

(Portland Police Bureau, 1990)

The new mission statement reads:

The mission of the Portland Police Bureau is to maintain and improve community livability by working with all citizens to preserve life, maintain human rights, protect property, and promote individual responsibility and community commitment.

(Portland Police Bureau, 1990)

Notice that the new mission statement reflects a new philosophy of policing described by Murphy (1988: 77) as that which “advocates a broad social role for the police and enhanced community responsibility and participation in policing.” In police jargon, it is an example of “walking your talk.”

Change advocates must be aware that the kinds of tasks required to achieve community policing goals and objectives of the revised mission will not be immediately apparent because community policing goals are non-traditional. Therefore, the achievement of these goals will require non-traditional tasks. And until these tasks become clear, role redefinitions (behavioral changes) will not be possible. As tasks begin to take form, driven by the unique

problems of a particular group or neighborhood community, role redefinitions will unfold and the kinds of structures required to support and sustain these roles will become apparent. Thus, the tasks (and the roles to achieve these tasks) that develop from the pursuit of community policing goals and objectives will determine the structural elements of the organization – for example, the communication patterns; managerial arrangement and style; responsibility unit structures; and administration policies (Bedeain, 1980: 78). In sum, the organizational structure required to support community policing evolves from the process of translating the restated mission into practice.

OTHER STRUCTURAL CHANGES

In addition, the paramilitary management structure must de-emphasize discipline and focus on leadership (Austin, 1992). It is understood that problem solving requires creative thinking and risk-taking. Supervisors must be re-trained to act as advisors and guides. It is difficult to be a disciplinarian when the expectation is that you will lead and guide subordinates. This is but another example of the ways in which structural changes influence behavioral changes by rendering traditional behaviors inappropriate. Properly trained and provided the freedom to act on their own initiative, the rank and file “will grasp the concept, appreciate its many dimensions, and skillfully fill their new roles” (Goldstein, 1993). The quasi-military bureaucratic management structure imposes a punitive style of supervision that is a disincentive to risk-taking and creativity necessary for the problem-solving orientation of community policing. In addition to being strategically incompatible with community policing, it is incompatible with the internal goals of decentralization and empowerment (Bennett, 1998). It is widely agreed that power sharing through participatory management is crucial to institutionalizing community policing (Couper and Lobitz, 1991; Austin, 1992; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1994; Roberg and Kuykendall, 1997; Dodenhoff, 1998; Oliver, 1998; Watson, Stone and Deluca, 1998). Decentralization of decision making, i.e., pushing decision making down to the lowest level of responsibility, and power sharing do not necessarily equate with “flattening” the organization by reducing the number of middle managers. Adopting agencies are finding that debureaucratization can be expressed as well through team decision making and lateral communication networks (Austin, 1992; Williams, 1995). In this way, the organization becomes mission-driven rather than rule-driven (Osborne and Gaebler, 1989).

Under rule-driven general orders, traditional reward and promotion criteria are based upon quantitative production such as the number of citations issued, the number of arrests, and the number of cases cleared. The customer focus of community policing requires employee recognition for quality job performance and a de-emphasis on rewards for quantity. As one officer explained it, “It’s no longer how many apples you pick, it’s how you pick them” (Clark, 1991). Thus, general orders need to be revised to include demonstrated involvement in community policing initiatives as one of the conditions for being awarded commendation and distinguished service medals, and for being considered for promotion.

In addition, recruitment should focus on the spirit of service (Brown, 1989). Chief Randall Aragon, a recent recipient of North Carolina’s Governor’s Award for Excellence in Community Policing requires that a recruitment candidate be able not only to learn to shoot straight, but also be a good problem solver (Dodenhoff, 1998). Problem solving is at the core of order maintenance and order maintenance is a core task of community

policing. The evidence linking the level of police order maintenance and the rate of serious crime is compelling. The police interpreted the decriminalization in the 1960s and 1970s of many disorderly conduct offenses as a mandate for non-enforcement and as a result, all reported non-traffic arrests involving drunkenness, disorderly conduct, vagrancy, and suspicion dropped from 52% in 1960 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1961; Skogan, 1990) to just 12% in 1990 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1991). Kelling and Cole (1997) provide persuasive evidence that as the level of order maintenance declined, serious crime escalated, and that as community policing problem-solving strategies embedded in order maintenance activities has increased, the rate of serious crime has declined (see also Wilson and Kelling, 1982).

Training is critical. The shank of order maintenance tasks requires extra-legal initiatives that include not only problem-solving skills but extensive knowledge of cultural diversity, the history of the groups involved (Wulff, 2000) and constitutional law. In addition, training must include leadership and community service skills (Linskey, 1998). If community policing is not taught at the local police academy, it needs to be introduced in the organization's advanced academy curriculum and become an integral part of field training (Harvey, 1999). Breen (1997: 16) maintains that without consideration for these important structural behavioral determinants, "the likelihood of community policing having a long-term . . . impact on American law enforcement is questionable."

It must be noted that one of the most important changes made by the Portland Police Bureau in preparation for institutionalizing the core strategy of community policing – problem solving – was a top-down design change. This was a change from annual line item budgeting to biennial program-based budgeting. This new budgeting process, discussed at length by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), holds the Bureau accountable for achieving its stated goals and objectives for community policing. Program budgeting structures in accountability not only for the Bureau as a whole, but for individual decision makers as well. In order to obtain its operating funds, the Bureau is required to develop long-range problem-solving plans and project the outcome of those plans. To achieve this responsibility, unit managers and supervisors are required to work with employees in their charge to set objectives and action plans, state the desired outcome, and continue working together to see that the work plans are followed. Thus work plans structure in decentralization through a process of participatory management and team building. The progress of the teams must be reported to management services, which in turn is required to report the Bureau's progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the work plans to the city council. Tying work plans for problem solving into the budgeting process ensures the structural entrenchment of the problem-oriented focus of community policing. Work plans delegate responsibility, decentralize decision making and authority, and empower individuals while requiring teamwork (cooperation, communication, and collaboration between responsibility units and between the police and the community). Work plans ensure accountability at the individual level, the unit level, the division level, and the organizational level because work plans are centered around involvement in community policing initiatives as a part of routine police work. Work plans enforce commitment to applying community policing problem-solving strategies by enforcing goal achievement. Work plans also serve as an integrating force among responsibility units. Units, divisions, and precincts do not have the prerogative of proceeding with community policing piece-meal or at their own pace. Work plans tie police services to the newly stated community policing goals and objectives, and list the strategies used and the work performed to fulfill the organization's overall mission. Work plans serve also as an overall

performance measure. "If you are looking for a way to drive change through an organization, you eventually have to reach for an [aggregate] performance measure system" (Moore, 1999: 9).

The multitude of demonstrated successes of the community policing problem-solving strategy argues compellingly for its continued integration with traditional law enforcement tactics (Kelling and Cole, 1996). It is clear that those organizations that fail to successfully incorporate this new policing strategy into their daily routines require assistance to develop appropriate implementation strategies (Goldstein, 1993). A final example of institutionalizing innovative change is Ursino's (1999: 6) report on the Washington State Patrol's (WSP) statewide adoption of the community policing model. With a goal to focus on problem-solving partnerships with the community, the WSP has focused its implementation strategy on institutionalizing community policing by "undergoing a systemic restructuring process."

Restructuring initiatives include reformation of job-performance appraisals, promotion processes, [general orders], a strategic plan, and trooper basic training. . . . It shifts the focus from output (numbers) to outcome (effectiveness).

It may be that two distinct kinds of organizational change are necessary to the successful institutionalization of community policing: structural change and change in the design of the organization itself. For example, the change by the Portland Police Bureau from annual, line-item budgeting to biennial program-based budgeting was a top-down change in the design of the organization. This amounts to an overarching change, encompassing and defining structure and providing a supportive framework for the programmatic components requiring bottom-up structural changes that accommodate behavioral changes and align police services with the actual needs of the community. In essence, the organizational restructuring process becomes self-designing. Design shapes structure that in turn shapes roles and determines how goals and objectives are accomplished. The result is that newly defined behaviors are supported and accommodated, and old behaviors become inappropriate. It was the failure to permit these changes to evolve and become institutionalized which doomed the team policing and other progressive initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s (Walker, 1993). As one Portland Police Bureau Commander put it, "form follows function" (Clark, 1994).

SUMMARY

This paper stresses the importance of police administrators' understanding that unless some fundamental structural changes are implemented, community policing is likely to fail to become institutionalized as a part of routine police operations. Numerous examples are provided to demonstrate the interdependence of organizational structure and employee behavior. George Kelling, one of today's leading and most respected authorities on police organization and behavior, sums up the theoretical perspectives by stating that adopting agencies can avoid returning to business as usual by instituting changes that "will destroy the old ways of thinking so that the innovations will become habits of the organization for the next generation that people wouldn't dream of wiping out [*sic*]" (Rosen, 1999: 9, 10).

Police executives must be aware that, unlike the traditional policing model, community policing is dynamic. Implementing community policing strategies is a process, not an event (Lawler, 1982) such that the problem-solving strategies will need to change as service demands change. A total integration of community policing as part of normal police

operations reduces the risk that, like other past attempts at reform, community policing will fade gradually as a function of non-management and non-acceptance until the organization has returned to business as usual. Community policing is a progressive step toward institutionalizing the flexibility that will enable modern police organizations to continue to align their operations with changing social condition.

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